

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION –MAY 17, 2021**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, May 17, 2021, at 11:30 a.m., at the Universal Conference Room.

Members Present

David N. Walker, Vice-Chair; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

Members Absent

Tony Brown, Chair

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Lisa Sprouse, DSS Director; Cindy Reel, Clerical Dept Supervisor

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 11:30a.m.

DSS Update – Adult Services

Ms. Sprouse gave an update and distributed the agency reports. A copy is with the agenda materials. Cindy Reel and Lori Ledford were also present from DSS.

Ms. Sprouse noted Adult Services had a virtual review from the State and got an excellent report on how well the department does their job.

Ms. Sprouse distributed copies of the House Bill 769: Foster Parents' Bill of Rights analysis. Mr. Wooten noted the bill passed unanimously in the NC House, and will now move to the Senate. HB 769 recognizes the importance of foster parents and the team of individuals working together to address the issues which lead to foster care. The analysis was also sent out to all foster parents in the county.

Ms. Reel gave an update on the Clerical Dept of DSS. She noted the department averages 3, 245 phone calls a month that comes through the switchboard. The department also averages 450 pieces of returned mail a month. Currently there are six fulltime employees, and two part-time employees in the department.

Ms. Reel noted the Medicaid Transformation that will take place in July will change the number of transportation cases the department handles from 100% to 30%. Of the 12,564 active Medicaid cases in the county, 7,227 will go under a broker and will schedule their own transportation after July 1.

Vice Chairman Walker thanked Ms. Sprouse and Ms. Reel for the presentation and the work of the department.

Lori Ledford distributed the inaugural edition of the DSS newsletter, Agency Buzz. The newsletter included new employees, staff changes and employee family events; as well as a recipe.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to approve the April 21, 2021 Recessed Session minutes; April 12, 2021 Closed Session minutes; and the April 21, 2021 Closed Session minutes, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Closed Session

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)6, second by Commissioner Allison at 11:55am. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Resuming Open Session

Commissioner Ellis made a motion in Open Session to go out of Closed Session at 12:12pm, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Self-Insurance Update

Mr. Wooten noted staff had been notified by the broker that today was the last day any changes could be made in the insurance policy. He added at the previous Board meeting on May 10th, the Board had directed staff after making a change with the third-party administrator, to look at employee premiums. He noted 33% of the counties in the state pay on average \$53 a month. A breakdown of the county insurance premiums was distributed to the Board.

Vice Chairman Walker asked Mr. Wooten for his recommendation due to the projected deficit of \$1M in the county budget. Mr. Wooten noted staff's opinion was not to do any increase based on the disruption of the pharmacy and medical plans from the new third-party administrator, with a projected savings of \$400,000 in pharmacy costs.

Discussion was held by the Board on employee premiums. Vice Chairman Walker noted employees need to share in the cost due to the rising cost of healthcare. Commissioner Allison agreed employees need to share in cost, and noted that he pays \$400 for family coverage. Commissioner Vaughn agreed the county can't go on absorbing the rising cost, but knows it is a good benefit for the employees not to have to pay for coverage as long as they participate in the wellness program. Commissioner Allison added the State does charge their employees \$50 a month. Commissioner Ellis added the school personnel that are on 10-month employees pay \$60 a month and the 12-month employees pay \$50 a month. Currently, the County is absorbing the cost of the claims and a budget amendment would be approved at the end of the year.

Mr. Wooten noted the County allows spousal coverage, and suggested next year the Board address children coverage only. Consensus of the Board was for the premium to be for employee only, not family coverage. Also, to keep the wellness benefit for the discounted \$50 a month.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion for employees to pay \$25 per pay period for employee only, second by Commission Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Discussion was held on having updates earlier in the calendar year on Self Insurance costs. Vice Chairman Walker also noted the insurance broker had recommended budgeting \$1100 per employee, and staff budgets approximately \$700 per employee.

The Board emphasized the need for good communication to the employees on why the Board took drastic measures for the premiums. Also, to encourage the employees to price shop for medical test due to a wide range of charges from the different providers for the same test.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn at 12:30pm, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

David Walker
Vice Chairman